

Eutaw Place Baptist Church
Dolphin and Eutaw Streets
Baltimore
Baltimore City County
Maryland

HABS No. MD-194

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

EUTAW PLACE BAPTIST CHURCH

Location: Dolphin and Eutaw Streets, Baltimore, Baltimore City County, Maryland.

Present Use: Church.

Brief Statement of Significance: This church, built in 1868-1871, is the only structure in Baltimore designed by Thomas U. Walter, architect of the dome and the House and Senate wings of the United States Capitol, and also a founder of the American Institute of Architects.

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PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATIONA. Architect and Dates

On page 17 of the MS. Record Book of the church it is stated, "Thomas U. Walter ... kindly tendered to us his services as architect gratuitously." The date of this action is not indicated, but it undoubtedly took place in 1868. The church no longer has any of the original plans.

This MS. Record Book of the Eutaw Place Baptist Church is a large volume bound in brown leather. Most of the entries are handwritten; a few printed clippings from various sources are pasted in. On the front cover is written: "Incorporated Dec. 7, 1868, to Jan. 1892." Much of the information given herewith was obtained from this MS. Record Book.

Ground was broken for the erection of the church in October, 1868. On April 22, 1869, the cornerstone was laid, and the virtually completed building was dedicated on April 2, 1871.

B. History

The Eutaw Place Baptist Church was founded as a colony of the Seventh Baptist Church, Baltimore, by its first pastor, Rev. Richard Fuller, D.D., who likewise became first pastor of the new church. Thomas U. Walter, the architect, is said to have been a close personal friend of the Rev. Fuller. The architect's estimated cost was \$60,000.

Before the architect presented his plans, a building committee had been formed, consisting of the following: Rev. Dr. R. Fuller, Hiram Woods (donor of the site), Eugene Levering, Sr., A. A. Chapman, H. S. Shryock, T. M. Johnson, and W. H. Perkins. Members of this committee studied church buildings in Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. A Baptist church in Cambridge, Mass., was selected as a model. How closely Walter followed the chosen model in plan, in style, or at all is not known.

After acceptance of the plans, James McComas was engaged as supervisory architect and R. T. Smith was appointed head carpenter. On January 9, 1869, a contract for marble and construction was let to John Whitelaw and James C. Fenhagen (Whitelaw & Fenhagen).

The following information was given in an account of the dedication ceremonies, published in the Baltimore Gazette for Monday, April 3, 1871. The building was constructed of Maryland marble, with a slate roof and pews of carved walnut. It could seat from 800 to 1,000 persons. The large window over the main entrance was the gift of Mrs. Eugene Levering, Sr. The steeple would be 197 feet 6 in. high and the spire was to be "placed in position in a few days". The account in the Baltimore American for the same date was somewhat shorter. According to it, the building was constructed of hammered marble, the pulpit and altar chairs were of walnut, and "when completed the tower will be 195 feet high."

The estimated completed cost is given in the MS. Record Book: Between \$101,000 and \$102,000.

The present pastor (1958), Rev. W. Clyde Atkins, D.D., and Miss Marjorie Allen, Church Secretary and Missionary, supplied the following information. Alterations have been chiefly repainting and the construction of a wooden partition in the Sunday School rooms on the ground floor. The lighting system was changed from gas to electricity in 1928, when the present hanging chandeliers were installed. The organ was reconstructed by the Wicks Organ Co. and was dedicated on September 30, 1945. Most of the glass is unfigured and is original. The southwest window, figured with angels, a World War I memorial, was installed about 1920.

C. References (Other)

1. Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Baltimore City and County. Philadelphia, 1881, pp. 565-66.
2. The contents of Safe Deposit Box No. 1053 at the Baltimore Trust Co., Baltimore, which includes the contract with Whitelaw & Fenhagen.

Prepared by Charles H. Flam, Archivist
The Peale Museum, Baltimore
November 1959

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Interest and Merit:

Built in 1868-1871, this church is the only structure in Baltimore designed by Thomas U. Walter, the architect of the dome and the House and Senate wings of the United States Capitol, and also a founder of the American Institute of Architects. As such, it is of interest in the history of architecture, and its spire, closing the end of the vista down Eutaw Place, does much to add attractiveness to the neighborhood. The exterior design, of restrained and simplified gothic style, is well composed and pleasing.

2. Condition of Fabric:

The structure appears to be basically sound, although some of the wooden flooring and the wooden tracery in the windows is deteriorating. Dampness has damaged some of the plaster on ceilings and walls.

B. Detailed Description

1. Orientation:

The church faces on Dolphin Street and is situated on the south-east corner at the intersection with Eutaw Street. Eutaw Street broadens out at this point to become Eutaw Place, and as these streets run roughly from south-east to north-west the axis of the church is likewise in that direction. For the sake of simplicity in the following account, the church will be treated as though it faced due west, the "west" wall actually being the north-west wall, and so on.

2. Foundations:

The foundations are of stone; those observable in the cellar at the south end of the church are of rough stone with some intermingling of brick.

3. Wall Construction:

The walls are of rusticated marble, with hammered marble for trim, window openings, hoods, pinnacles and pointed spire. On the northeast corner of the building is a two-story staircase tower of a later date, constructed of brick. Interior construction of window arches, as

seen in the interior of the spire, is also of brick. A wooden passage way connects the building with the church offices adjoining on Dolphin Street.

4. Layout:

The edifice roughly conforms to the rectangular plot of ground on which it stands. The spire at the street corner is the dominating feature of the asymmetrical design, which achieves balance by the relative proportions of the building and the additional accent of a tapering pinnacle near the north end of the facade. The spire has been variously described as 195 and 197 1/2 feet high.

As Eutaw Street slopes downhill from Dolphin Street, light and access are provided for an elevated basement which was evidently designed from the first for meeting rooms and Sunday School. Below this, at the east end, is a partial cellar; above is the church auditorium, with a vestibule along the west side and an ambulatory corridor and other compartments to the east.

5. Openings

- a. Doorways and Doors: The facade has a central doorway approached by seven steps and flanked by a large door in the tower base at street level and a smaller door, raised two steps, on the other side. On Eutaw Street is a shallow enclosed porch with a door leading to the elevated basement. All these doors are oak and have a central gothic panel with a quatrefoil underneath.
- b. Windows and shutters: Above the main entrance is a large tracery window in a pointed arch, and at the apex of the facade is a small tracery window in a diamond-shaped opening. The tower has a lancet window on the south side at street level; the second level has a lancet window on the south and west sides; the third level has narrower lancets on all four sides; the fourth level has four louvred lancets; the octagonal spire has four lower lancets with louvres and four higher and smaller lancets with louvres on alternate sides.

The south side of the building has four rectangular window openings into the elevated basement, each containing two lancets, plus a single lancet window beyond the side entrance. The floor above has five long lancet windows and one smaller one. The north

side originally had corresponding windows, but some of them have now been altered to allow for the brick addition and the passage way to the church house. All windows on the facade and the north and south sides of the building have stone hoods conforming to the shape of the openings, and all frames and tracery are of wood.

At the rear, on the east side, are four double lancet windows, sashed, in rectangular openings, for the elevated basement. Above are two common sashed windows, six panes per sash, at the ambulatory level. At ground level are two small windows, one possibly a coal chute. This type of opening is repeated on either side of the steps leading to the main entrance of the church.

6. Roof:

The roof is peaked, the slope being broken at the line of the dormers and angling outward less steeply to the molded stone cornice and gutter. It is covered with slate, bands of hexagonal slates alternating with the rectangular. The roof of the entrance porch on Eutaw Street is similarly covered.

7. Dormers:

There are five wooden dormers on each side of the roof, with three triangular louvred ventilating openings in a line above.

8. Chimneys:

There are three chimneys at the rear: one at the peak of the roof and one on either side at the break in the roof line.

C. Interior

1. Vestibule:

Immediately inside the main entrance is a narrow space from which five steps curve upwards on each side to the vestibule at the auditorium level. The steps and front of the vestibule are furnished, with a heavy walnut balustrade and massive newel posts, heavily carved. The same level is reached by steps from the flanking doors.

The vestibule is irregular in shape, divided roughly into three sections -- a broad one in the middle, opposite the central door, and smaller ones at each side -- connected by deep lancet arches. All have a deeply molded plaster cornice and there is a tendency here, as in many parts of the church, to round off the angles of the walls. Pine baseboards are painted dark brown; the walls are brown up to a height of about four feet and plain buff above. The wooden floors are covered with brown linoleum.

Three doors lead into the church: a double door in the center and a single door near either end. These appear to be walnut and are carved in the same design of gothic panel and lower quatrefoil which is found on the outside doors.

2. Tower:

The tower staircase ascends from the street-level entrance to the vestibule level and continues in broad, massive curves following the walls of the tower to near the beginning of the spire proper. It has turned walnut balusters, carved newel posts, and pine treads. The outside of the stairs is decorated with a fret under each riser. There are four landings from street-level to ceiling.

Beyond the tower ceiling a crude wooden staircase continues through three additional levels to the top of the spire. It is here that the construction of the walls is most plainly visible -- rough stone, rough brick arches over apertures, timber braces in the spire and wooden louvres in window openings. Provision seems to have been made for a bell, but apparently none was ever installed.

At the opposite end of the vestibule is another staircase which mounts as far as the balcony landing, thus providing access to the balcony from both sides.

3. Church Auditorium:

- a. The Balcony: The balcony runs the width of the auditorium and broadens out in a wide alcove at the back, where a door on either side opens from the staircase landings. In this alcove is a large window with leaded panes, the glass painted in Victorian designs, and divided into three principal panels

and smaller areas by wooden tracery. There are nine rows of pews, four in the alcove and five across the balcony proper. The six towards the rear are of the old open type; the first three have more recent folding seats. The floor of the balcony is raised one step to each row. The railing in front is solid and at each end a spindle railing crosses that section of the long window which is cut by the balcony.

- b. The Ceiling: The ceiling takes the form of a pointed Tudor arch which is interrupted part way up each side by a transverse molded beam, ornamented by pendants from which hang electric lighting fixtures of comparatively recent date. Beyond these beams the arch resumes at a slightly higher level and rises to the central rib at the apex. Corresponding ribs divide the ceiling area into compartments. These false beams, ribs, moldings and pendants are all of plaster. Ventilators with wooden fretwork grills run the length of the ceiling at each side above the transverse beams, three to each compartment between the arching ribs.
- c. The Walls: The walls are plaster, painted buff. The ceiling is slightly lighter and at the juncture of the two is a painted crenelation. Peeling paint in the balcony reveals that at one time the walls were evidently a dark grey-green. A dado of vertical boards with a "chair-rail" molding surrounds the auditorium to a height of about four feet and in line with the base of the windows in such a way that it flows into the window openings and forms their sills. This dado is painted dark brown. There are two memorial plaques on the walls: one of marble to Richard Fuller, first minister, and one of bronze for Eugene Levering, an original deacon, dated 1939.
- d. Windows: The windows are lancet shaped with a dividing central column and light above. There are five on each side of the church, nine in opalescent yellowish glass and one in art glass which is a memorial to World War I. The lower right portion of each window opens out in a casement panel and over the lower part of each is an interior window of plain glass, to keep off draughts in cold weather, with leaves opening inward for ventilation when desired.

The painted glass at the back of the balcony and in some of the tower windows may give some idea of the original style intended for the auditorium.

- e. Floor: The floor is wood, covered with wall-to-wall red carpeting. Open registers occur here and there, the original type consisting of a circular iron grill set in a square of soapstone, while the more recent installations are plain rectangular registers with simple grills.
- f. Columns: The auditorium is unobstructed, except for two iron columns with simple capitals which support the balcony.
- g. The Pews: The pews are walnut, open, with carved ends and rounded backs. Their pine seats are covered with red cushions.
- h. East End: At the east end is a central pointed arch over the stage, or chancel, flanked by two shallow tudor arches. That to the north is closed with a walnut screen of solid panels and open tracery work, above the large marble immersion font, about three feet high on the outside and seven square, which is decorated with carved gothic panels and lined with sheet iron. The arch to the south holds the organ and has in front of it a raised and railed-off area for the console and choir. The organ's front pipes have painted designs for decoration.
- i. Stage: The stage is of two levels. The first, raised one step above the floor of the auditorium, runs from the north wall, curves outward in front of the central arch, and turns abruptly to join with the east wall just beyond the central arch. The upper level rises in front of the central arch, curving outward at either end to provide five steps from one level to the other. Its frontal panels are elaborately carved in the gothic manner and further decorated by two small semi-columns with capitals.

4. Chancel:

Behind the central arch at this level is a shallow, three-sided apsidal alcove, for the chancel. A tall door on either side provides access to the ambulatory,

each door taking the shape of the lancet arch in which it is set. (A similar door is situated at the end of the east wall between the font and the north wall). The ribbed half-domed ceiling of the alcove converges to the apex of the pointed arch which fronts it and is decorated with a stenciled frieze, stylized floral designs, and four cartouches, bearing religious symbols -- a pelican in her piety, a lamb carrying a flag, and two sacred monograms. At the intersection of the ribs is a painted sunburst.

- a. The Chancel Furniture: The chancel furniture is walnut, heavily and elaborately carved. In the center is the reading desk, massive buttresses carved at each corner and a bold circular gothic design on the front. Behind, against the wall between the doors, is an ornate settee, divided by arms into three sections above which three open-work gothic arches form the back. The upholstery is red velvet. On the lower level platform are flanking single chairs which match the settee and two smaller and simpler straight-backed chairs. In the center of this platform is the walnut communion table, carved with gothic motifs and supported by crossed legs.

5. The Ambulatory:

The ambulatory behind the auditorium is an irregularly shaped and comparatively narrow area. At the northern end is the brick tower staircase of a later date which communicates with the elevated basement. Next to this, in line with the font, are three cubicles used as dressing rooms. These are evidently of a more recent period and are formed by plain wooden partitions little more than head high.

At this point also, behind the screen which closes the northern arch and bisects the font, are steps down into the font. Doors in the screen permit the whole font to be opened up for baptismal ceremonies.

Between this section of the ambulatory and that directly behind the chancel is a vertical sliding panel door, furnished with counter-weights to help in raising it.

Behind the chancel itself is a simple corridor with two sashed windows which have interior folding louvred shutters.

South of the chancel six steps lead down from the ambulatory corridor to the organ works behind the southern arch. Originally these steps were part of a flight of stairs that led directly to the elevated basement.

6. Elevated Basement:

The elevated basement is divided into a large central meeting room and smaller meeting rooms by sliding partitions which may be part of the original design. The upper half of each partition is formed of rows of rectangular glass panels, the lowest rank of which are frosted and bear Victorian designs of flowers, lyres, and similar subjects. At the east end are three rooms formed by permanent partitions, together with the vestibule on the south side where four steps lead up to the Eutaw Street entrance. An imitation fire place, of tile and carved wood, decorates the west end of the central meeting room. This is apparently a later addition. Hot air heating registers similar to those in the auditorium above are found in the elevated basement, and some grill ducts have been installed in the walls. Two rows of iron columns with capitals, five on each side, support the ceiling.

7. Cellar or Sub-Basement:

Stairs from the room at the southeast corner of the elevated basement lead down to the cellar or sub-basement, which extends under only part of the eastern end of the building. Here the walls are of rough stone with some intermingling of brick and the floor is rubble. A pit holds the furnace and coal bins are adjacent. Another furnace is situated at the west end of the building, just behind the steps to the main entrance and virtually on a level with the elevated basement with which it communicates.

8. Lighting Fixtures:

Lighting fixtures were installed when the church converted from gas illumination in 1928, but the original gas fixtures are still in place in many parts of the building and are mostly simple brackets projecting from the walls. One of the more interesting of these was found inside a large double-doored cupboard designed for use as a book case: it consisted of two vents at the end of a long, jointed arm, which could be pulled out when the doors were opened and folded back again when no longer required.

9. Hardware:

Door knobs and similar fittings are usually molded brass; door hinges are iron and some of the larger hinges are double so that some doors can be opened in either direction.

Prepared by F. Garner Ranney, Archivist
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